UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.191/IPC/9
7 June 2000

Original: ENGLISH

Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee for the
Third United Nations Conference on the
Least Developed Countries
First session
New York, 24 July 2000
Item 3 of the provisional agenda

REPORT OF THE SECOND INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON THE PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Geneva, 10 April 2000

GE.00-51212 (E)
00-53810

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
Introduction		1 - 2	3
I.	Progress in the preparatory process for the Conference	3 - 14	3
II.	Nature and scope of the contributions of agencies to the preparatory process for the Conference	15 - 34	6
III.	Conclusions and recommendations	35 - 37	9

ANNEXES

I.	Agenda	11
II.	List of documents	12
III.	Participation	13

INTRODUCTION

1. The Second Inter-Agency Meeting on the Preparatory Process for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) was held in Geneva on 10 April 2000 in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 53/182. The meeting was a follow-up to the first Inter-Agency Meeting, held in Geneva on 20 July 1999.

2. The **Executive Secretary of the Third United Nations Conference on the LDCs, Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka**, opened the Inter-Agency Meeting on behalf of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD.

I. PROGRESS IN THE PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR THE CONFERENCE

3. In her statement on the preparatory process for the Third United Nations Conference on the LDCs the **Executive Secretary** of the Conference briefed the meeting on progress made in the preparatory process for the Conference at national, regional and global levels, as well as on the substantive agenda for the Conference.

Preparations at country level

4. She said that the country-level preparatory process had been launched in 46 LDCs with country visits by members of the UNCTAD secretariat. Following those visits, National Preparatory Committees (NPCs) had been established and Local Resource Persons (LRPs) designated to provide substantive support to those Committees. Three regional coordinators had been appointed to provide substantive support to the NPCs and LRPs. The assistance by the European Union (EU) had proved critical in lending momentum and seriousness to country-level preparations. In addition, some local UNDP Offices had expressed their willingness to provide support to the country-level preparatory process, and bilateral and other donors represented in LDCs were being encouraged to support the country-level preparatory process through the NPCs.

5. She said that the country-level preparatory process required the establishment of Local Development Partners Forums (LDPFs), which would include bilateral and multilateral development partners. It was expected that the NPCs and the LDPFs would form the Local Consultative Forums for the country-level preparatory process.

6. It was hoped that some LDCs would be able to submit the first drafts of their country programmes of action by mid-June 2000 to enable the secretariat to distribute these documents to member States so that they could be discussed at the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee, to be held in New York from 24 to 28 July 2000. Those LDCs that would, for practical reasons, not be able to present a draft programme of action at that meeting were expected to submit at least a review of the results of their programme of action for the 1990s. This would be the first part of the draft programme of action, taking stock of developments in the 1990s in accordance with the guidelines agreed for the presentation of the country-level programme of action.

7. Experience regarding the pace of country-level preparations was rather mixed. In a number of countries, the setting up of the preparatory mechanisms had been delayed owing to the sheer complexity of coordination at various government levels or between sectoral ministries. In other countries, no action was initiated until the necessary resources had been made available.

8. She emphasized that the approach to country-level preparations had been to make it clear that they were meant to reduce parallel and overlapping planning demands by bringing all initiatives together within a coordinated planning framework that would guide development activities and international support over a 10-year period.

9. She called upon the meeting to make practical suggestions about how to give effect to the call by the General Assembly to the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank to link the forthcoming round-table and consultative group meetings to the preparatory process for the Conference, and to ensure that they made a substantive contribution to the Conference and that country-level programmes of action had a clear "destination" both at national and international level.

Regional-level preparations

10. At the regional level, two expert-level preparatory meetings had been held - the first in Addis Ababa from 27 to 29 March 2000 for English-speaking African LDCs and the second in Kathmandu from 3 to 5 April 2000 for the Asian and Pacific LDCs. The third meeting - for French-speaking African LDCs and Haiti - was scheduled to be held in Niamey from 18 to 20 April 2000. The Conference secretariat in cooperation with the regional economic commissions would organize regional high-level preparatory events during the preparatory process. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was planning a special event on the substantive issues for the Conference, to be held in Addis Ababa in November 2000 on the occasion of the meeting of the Ministers of Finance and Planning. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was preparing similar events.

Global-level preparations

11. At the global level, a major concern in the preparatory process was how to succeed in the area of advocacy and publicity. If the Conference was to succeed, support for the commitments to be negotiated had to be secured with different constituencies well in advance in order to improve the chances of a significant breakthrough in Brussels. Much groundwork needed to be done involving all stakeholders, with a clearly defined division of labour. Initiatives had to be taken at the national level in all member States. If ownership of the country-level programme of action was being encouraged for LDCs at the national level, the development partners should likewise be encouraged to create national preparatory mechanisms to secure understanding and support for the global commitments to be adopted at the Conference. Since the Conference was not for LDCs, but about LDCs, preparations had to be conducted in all members States, particularly those that were key development partners for LDCs. Some donor countries had already taken exemplary steps at national level in this direction, and should be commended. The speaker was hopeful that preparations to be undertaken through the NGOs and the private sector would help to move this process forward.

Substantive agenda for the Conference

12. The substantive agenda for the Brussels Conference was discussed at length in the briefing note prepared by the secretariat and distributed to participants. She stressed that although the Conference would deal with all the development problems facing LDCs, with all their many dimensions and ramifications, success would lie in focusing on the critical bottlenecks. Spreading the agenda too wide and too thin might mean drowning in details. In this regard, while country-level programmes of action would indicate national-level priorities, and the relevant sectoral agencies knew very well the needs of different countries, the global agenda might benefit from concentrating on achieving two things. The first of these was to induce those countries that had not honoured commitments agreed at past global conferences to do so. The second was to secure additional concessions for LDCs in order to assist their efforts to integrate into the global economy in a beneficial manner.

13. A number of comments were made in the ensuing discussion.

- Some speakers expressed concern that there was not enough time for preparation of the country programmes of action (CPAs). If these were to be submitted by June, there were now scarcely two months left;

- Ensuring the participation of all stakeholders (Governments, NGOs and academia) in the preparation of the CPAs was considered by many to be the key to their credibility and ownership;

- Some speakers sought clarification about the relationship between the CPAs and the existing annual/five-year perspective plans;

- Others indicated that for the CPAs to have any status, they had, like the existing development programmes, to go through a process of validation, e.g. adoption by Parliament;

- Some participants felt that the task of preparing CPAs was not so arduous, because the basic information existed in annual/five-year perspective plans and other relevant documents. The CPAs should draw heavily on these sources;

- One participant drew attention to a planning exercise which had just been completed in a number of Asian LDCs and argued that there was no need to conduct a new exercise. The CPAs for the Asian LDCs should be based on the plans which had just been adopted.

14. With regard to the UNCTAD secretariat's proposal that special or extraordinary round tables be held to give effect to United Nations General Assembly resolution 53/182:

- One participant noted that there was no General Assembly mandate for convening "extraordinary" round tables as such. What the General Assembly called for was the use of the existing mechanisms where possible. In his view, there was in any case not enough time before the Conference to organize any such extraordinary round tables.

II. NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF AGENCIES TO THE PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR THE CONFERENCE

15. For the discussions on this item, the **Executive Secretary** introduced a paper entitled "Note on contributions by organizations and agencies to the preparatory process for the Conference". Its objective was to facilitate an exchange of views among the agencies in order to clarify their respective roles during the preparatory stage as well as during the Conference itself.

16. She highlighted four main headings under which the agencies, at various stages (national, regional and global levels), could make their contributions. The indicative thematic and/or sectoral topics included: (i) governance, peace and social stability; (ii) the challenge of financing growth and development in LDCs; (iii) overcoming marginalization and enhancing LDCs' productive capacities through trade and investment; and (iv) enhancing programme implementation performance by establishing operational links between the Global Programme of Action and the country-level programmes of action, country-specific/regional round-table meetings; and selected country success stories or best practices.

17. During the discussions, observations were made by representatives of agencies. In general, commitment to the preparatory process and the Conference itself was reaffirmed. Those agencies that had offices in LDCs stated that they had instructed their field offices to support the preparatory work at the national level.

18. More specifically, representatives of agencies made the points set out below.

19. The representative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development provided an update on the work currently being undertaken by his organization. He said that the Development Assistance Committee's High-Level Meeting of Ministers responsible for Development Cooperation and Heads of Agencies, to be held on 11 and 12 May 2000, would discuss matters relevant to the LDC Conference. Issues on the agenda would include poverty reduction; partnership strategies; country-level frameworks; policy coherence; quantity, quality and catalytic uses of official development assistance (ODA); private flows; debt sustainability and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative; the new international financial architecture; and global public goods. Together with the *Development Cooperation 1999 Report* (issued in February 2000) and a seminar on development finance ("The Way Forward"), held on 29 and 30 March 2000, those discussions would shape the OECD's and members' inputs to the United Nations high-level intergovernmental event on financing for development (FFD) as well as the LDC Conference. He emphasized the importance of fostering a linkage between the FFD event (now scheduled for June 2000) and the LDC Conference.

20. The **representative of the World Trade Organization** stated that his organization, like the other agencies and multilateral institutions, would contribute, as appropriate and in accordance with its mandate, to the achievement of the objectives of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. He noted, however, that the WTO functioned at

the multilateral (global) level, and did not have country-level or regional representation. Nevertheless, addressing the concerns, problems and marginalization of LDCs was an objective to which it attached priority and to which it remained deeply committed.

21. The WTO was a member-driven organization and its members had to determine the details of the contribution to be made to the LDC Conference. Consideration was currently being given to including an item on the Conference on the agenda of the Sub-Committee on Least-Developed Countries for appropriate consideration. Such consideration would afford members the opportunity to express views and positions and make recommendations.

22. Irrespective of the details of any specific proposals that might be made, the WTO continued to pursue and implement its core mandate, which was trade liberalization through negotiated and autonomous improvements in market access, ensuring the security of market access, and eliminating restrictions and barriers to trade, including for LDCs. Trade was the engine for growth, and economic growth was indispensable to poverty reduction. In that connection, the WTO Director-General was consulting intensively on several issues before the General Council, one of which was the enhancing of market access opportunities for LDCs in order to assist their efforts to benefit from the non-discriminatory rules-based system.

23. Furthermore, the Director-General was also consulting with WTO members on the capacity-building and technical assistance needs of LDCs. In this regard, two issues were noteworthy. The first of these was the consultations of the Director-General with the objective of securing an increase in financial resources for WTO technical assistance, of which LDCs were the principal beneficiaries. The second was the improvements to the functioning of the Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance, currently under mandated review. The Director-General had accorded the highest priority to considering such improvements. To that end, he had convened a meeting of the heads of the six core agencies (World Bank, IMF, UNCTAD, UNDP, ITC and WTO) to consider the results of the review of the Integrated Framework, with a view to improving the latter's functioning and hence the quality of assistance delivered to LDCs.

24. The representative of the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization** expressed concern about the coordination and time-frame of the task of combining 48 country programmes of action into a single, global programme. He asked what exactly was expected of each relevant international agency. Was it to make an evaluation of developments in the relevant sectors, or to propose a new plan of action for the future? For example, UNESCO had a global plan of action for LDCs: was it to be inserted in the Global Programme of Action for LDCs? He advocated that each agency, or a number of them, have responsibility for organizing a special event during the Conference. He expressed UNESCO's readiness to act in this capacity (in respect of science and technology, and culture).

25. The representative of the **Food and Agriculture Organization** informed the meeting of FAO's current work in preparing a study on the role of agriculture in the development of the LDCs. This study assessed the many constraints faced by the LDC's agricultural sectors,

examined ways to improve relevant supply capacities and competitiveness, envisaged strategies for agricultural development in the LDCs and drew relevant lessons from success stories in developing countries. During the preparation of the study, FAO hoped to be able to benefit from the preparatory process for the Conference and looked forward to close cooperation with its organizers on agricultural development, and trade and food security in the LDCs.

26. The representative of the **World Health Organization** described a useful dual approach to the role of the agencies. One way of contributing to the Conference would be through classic thematic reporting, with a report on issues and policies along the lines used at the previous two Conferences. Another way of approaching sectoral topics, less traditional, would consist in examining the implications for the relevant sectors of the three or four dominant themes of the Conference (aid, trade, investment, etc.), as these generally related to all sectors, and were conducive to a useful analysis of constraints and opportunities. For example, regarding trade matters, WHO, UNCTAD and WTO had already worked together on issues of common interest (e.g. trade in health services) and could focus their work on LDC-specific issues.

27. The representative of the **United Nations Industrial Development Organization** confirmed the interest of UNIDO in contributing to the Conference, but she was not yet in a position to express a firm commitment. She pointed out that UNIDO, in the context of the 2001 General Conference, was considering the organization of an LDC symposium which would be preceded by expert group meetings on issues such as technological development and enhancement of productivity and competitiveness. These activities could be aligned with the preparatory process of LDC III. For the Conference itself, UNIDO might consider the hosting of a parallel event, which could be in the form of a thematic panel discussion, or a private sector meeting or investment forum and which could be organized in cooperation with UNCTAD. These ideas were still at a very preliminary stage and would need to be further substantiated in-house and with other system actors.

28. The representative of the **World Intellectual Property Organization** said that WIPO's initiative to address the marginalization and development problems of the LDCs and the constraints facing them as they sought to become integrated into the culture of intellectual property and the world economy focused on enhancing the ability of public administration and the private sector to formulate and implement appropriate intellectual property policies and strengthen managerial and technical capacities to provide the service infrastructure needed to support intellectual property, as requested by the WIPO member States.

29. Since 1998, WIPO had been implementing Nationally Focused Action Plans (NFAPs) for the benefit of LDCs and had been assisting them in building up or upgrading their intellectual property offices with adequate institutional infrastructure and resources, qualified staff, modern management techniques and access to information technology support systems. WIPO had sent advisory missions, on request, to intellectual property offices in LDCs to give advice on modernizing management systems and streamlining administrative procedures. It had sponsored visits by officials of LDCs to offices in industrialized countries to study various aspects of modernization. In addition, LDCs had received computer equipment from WIPO.

30. In the area of copyright and related rights, advice and assistance had been given in connection with the setting up or strengthening of collective management societies in LDCs. With regard to the implementation of the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (the TRIPS Agreement), WIPO had organized interregional, regional, subregional and national meetings for LDCs and presented a clear and balanced view of the Agreement to enable them to assess the conformity or otherwise of their existing enforcement mechanisms vis-à-vis the provisions of the TRIPS Agreement.

31. It is the strongly held belief of the Director-General of WIPO that LDCs individually and collectively should take full advantage of all initiatives aimed at institution-building and at enhancing their human production capacities with a view to improving their performance, nationally, regionally and internationally.

32. In this context, in preparation for the Third United Nations Conference on LDCs, WIPO was working closely with UNCTAD and other international organizations. It had organized a High-Level Interregional Roundtable on Intellectual Property for Least Developed Countries in 1999. This had been addressed by Mr. Rubens Ricupero, Secretary-General of UNCTAD, in his capacity as the Secretary-General of the Third United Nations Conference on LDCs. In 2000, a number of national, subregional and regional meetings were being organized in preparation for that Conference. The report of the High-Level Interregional Roundtable and the various reports on WIPO's activities would be used as a contribution by WIPO to the Conference.

33. The representative of the **International Telecommunication Organization** said that his organization's objective was to facilitate universal access to modern information technology. It had a special programme of action for LDCs and gave more and more assistance to those countries. Information technology was unevenly distributed, even among LDCs. New technologies could enhance the microeconomic trading environment as well as provide foreign exchange earning opportunities to countries, including LDCs, which made appropriate investments.

34. The representative of the **Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries** (OSCAL/DESA) said that it was important to undertake a review of the outcome of major United Nations Conferences and their follow-up in relation to LDCs, as well as the linkages between these global conferences and LDC III. Furthermore, in order to highlight the key structural issues affecting the productive capacity and hence growth and development of LDCs, OSCAL intended to make the following inputs: drawing on the work of DESA and the Commission on Sustainable Development on energy, it would prepare a review of energy potential and utilization in LDCs, highlighting problems and constraints, as appropriate; jointly with UNESCO, UNCTAD and ECA, it would organize an ad hoc expert group meeting on science and technology for development of LDCs. It was also pertinent to note that, at the Consultative Forum, DESA had specifically been requested by the representative of the European Community to make a commitment to prepare the report on linkages to major conferences, to be ready for the first session of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

35. Participants in the meeting reaffirmed their support for the preparatory process for the Third United Nations Conference on LDCs and the Conference itself.

36. Bilateral and multilateral consultations between and among the agencies were encouraged in order to ensure coordination and synergies so as to enhance joint cooperative efforts. In this context, the need for consultations between the UNDP, the World Bank and UNCTAD, with a view to working out modalities for giving effect to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 53/182, was emphasized.

37. It was agreed that the Third Inter-Agency Meeting would be held in New York in July 2000, back to back with the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee.

ANNEX I

Agenda

10:00 - 10:10	Welcoming remarks by Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, Executive Secretary, LDC-III
10:10 - 10:15	Adoption of the Agenda of the Meeting
10:15 - 10.45	Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Conference on the progress in the preparatory process for the Conference
10:45 - 12:15	General discussions
12:15 - 13:00	Introductory remarks on the nature and scope of the contributions of agencies to the preparatory process for the Conference: (a) during the preparatory process, (b) at the Conference
14:30 - 16:30	Exchange of views on the nature and scope of contributions by agencies: selected themes, substantive thematic papers and participation in parallel events at the Conference, timetable for the submission of inputs by the agencies for the preparatory process and for the Conference
16:30 - 17:30	Finalization of the draft report of the Meeting
17:30 - 18:00	Consideration and adoption of the Report of the Meeting
18:00	Closure of Meeting

ANNEX *II*

List of documents

1. Draft agenda

2. Briefing note on the preparatory process for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

3. Note on contributions by organizations and agencies to the preparatory process for the Conference

4. Least Developed Countries 1999 Report

5. Statistical Synopsis of the Least Developed Countries 1999

6. Note verbale

ANNEX III

Attendance

1. The following State was represented at the Meeting:

Sweden

2. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the Meeting:

European Community
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

3. The following specialized agencies and related organization were represented at the Meeting:

International Labour Organisation
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
World Health Organization
World Bank
International Monetary Fund
Universal Postal Union
International Telecommunication Union
World Meteorological Organization
World Intellectual Property Organization
United Nations Industrial Development Organization
International Atomic Energy Agency
World Food Programme
World Trade Organization

4. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Population Fund and the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and Least Developed Countries were represented at the Meeting. The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO was also represented at the Meeting. The Non-Governmental Liaison Service was represented at the Meeting.